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PREACHED AT THE
ANNIVERSARY MEETING
OF THE
SONS OF THE CLERGY,
IN THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH of ST. PAUL,
ON THURSDAY, MAY 20, 1790.

BY THE *K*
REV. DURAND RHUDE, D.D.
RECTOR OF BRANTHAM, WITH EAST BERGHOLT AND
GREAT WENHAM, SUFFOLK,
AND
CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

King's Coll. Camb. MA 1759

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
LISTS OF THE NOBILITY, CLERGY, AND GENTRY, WHO HAVE BEEN
STEWARDS FOR THE FEASTS OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY,
TOGETHER WITH THE NAMES OF THE PREACHERS, AND THE
SUMS COLLECTED AT THE ANNIVERSARY MEETINGS, SINCE THE
YEAR 1721.

L O N D O N:

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SONS OF THE CITY

ANNUAL REPORT

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The Most Honourable the Marquis of TICHFIELD.

The Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of St. DAVID'S.

The Right Hon. WILLIAM WYNDHAM GRENVILLE.

The Right Hon. the LORD MAYOR.

The Reverend THOMAS FOTHERGILL, D.D. Provost of
Queen's College, Oxford.

ROBERT HALLIFAX, M.D. F.R.S.

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ROBERT DENT, Esq;

JOHN JOHNSON, Esq;

(S T E W A R D S

for the LATE FEAST of the SONS of the CLERGY)

T H I S

D I S C O U R S E,

delivered and published at their Request,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

by their faithful

and obedient Servant,

THE PREACHER.

The Right Honorable the Lord Bishop of London
The Right Honorable the Lord Bishop of London
The Right Honorable the Lord Bishop of London

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ST. JAMES I. 27.

PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED BEFORE GOD AND THE FATHER IS THIS, TO VISIT THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOWS IN THEIR AFFLICTION, AND TO KEEP HIMSELF UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD.

WHAT an amiable idea of the religion we profess do the words now read exhibit: and, at the same time, what a solid confutation do they afford, to the calumny of those who represent Christianity as fullen and severe; who describe its disciples as ill-tempered and morose, and averse to the discharge of the social offices of life! The Gospel of Jesus Christ gives countenance to no such dispositions, and the author of our text expressly tells us, that the excellence of our profession appears as much in active as in passive virtues; in the performance of public and relative duties, as well as in exercises of private obligation; in the display of benevolence towards others, as well as in habits of self-government and moral discipline.

But while some by such misrepresentations, endeavour to discredit the character of our religion, there are others, who do it equal injustice, and equally depart from the declarations of Scripture, by supposing it to consist principally in speculative opinions and mere matters of belief.

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The design, perhaps, may not have been quite so malevolent in the latter instance as in the former, but the effects have not been less mischievous; and the world, in some ages of it, has witnessed the fiercest contentions, and the peace of the church has been sometimes broken and destroyed, in defence of doctrines of doubtful and uncertain meaning, and in vindication of points, of little or no moment to life or manners.

While the enemies of the Gospel thus wilfully mistake what it delivers, and some of its friends unknowingly confound its tenets; the ingenuous and well-informed professors govern their hearts and lives by the plain, clear, unequivocal decisions of Christ and his apostles. Such discriminate, as they ought, between the commandments of God, and the traditions of men; between those articles, for which, under all circumstances, they must earnestly contend, and those, which, as being more indifferent, challenge less concern; between, in short, the essentials of their faith, and the circumstantialia of it; always including among the former, Love and Charity; and being satisfied, that in no case can there be genuine Christianity, where there is no benevolence; that whatever may be the merits of a man's creed, however fervent and abstracted his forms of address towards the great Object of his devotion, or however correct and severe his ordinary course of private deportment, yet if he refuses "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," his religion cannot be "pure and undefiled before God and the Father;" he is deficient in one grand distinguishing mark of his profession; whatever he may have done, he has omitted what
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ought not to have been left undone; he has neglected the weightier matters of the law.

Not that we mean to insinuate, as if love to man embraced the whole of our religious service, or as if piety towards our Maker, and purity in the conduct of ourselves, were not equally comprised, in the comprehensive view of Christianity. There are not wanting those, who on this subject put asunder what God has joined together, by seeming to imagine, that the performance of one duty, supercedes the necessity of their obedience to another; and that by liberal proofs of pity and kindness, they cancel all the obligations of divine worship, and all the demands of personal virtue. Easy indeed would be the compromise, if no more was required of us, than the mere distribution of alms. Men of the loosest morals, by compassionate attentions to the exigencies of the miserable and unfortunate, might thus live without God in the world, might freely indulge their every appetite, and yet fancy themselves entitled to the best rewards of the Gospel; and thus the system of faith and practice which Christ taught, instead of being a yoke, though an easy one, and a burden, though a light one, as he himself described it, would contradict his description, lose all its energy, and really become, in no sense of the terms, the smallest restraint on any.

But however earnest some may be, in wishing such a scheme of commutation, might secure their happiness hereafter, we have not so learned Christ. We know the fallacy of such reasoning, and the corrupt principles which produce

produce it. We are convinced, from the nature of things, as well as from the solemn assurance of divine authority, that the first and great commandment enjoins the love of God, while the second directs the love of our neighbour; and that having equally fulfilled the obligations of both these laws, we are then to strive, in the management of ourselves, and in our commerce and connexions with the world, to keep ourselves pure, undefiled, and unspotted.

Having thus premised these general remarks, in illustration of the apostle's definition of pure religion, and endeavoured to shew, that it is a phrase of extensive import, including alike the discharge of our several duties to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, and that the performance of each is indispensably incumbent on all, who profess to believe the doctrines of our Saviour, we now advance, to the more immediate application of the words of our text, to the purpose of our present meeting.

It has pleased the good Providence of God, for wise reasons in the government of the world, to permit a sad variety of wretchedness to prevail in it. Which ever way we turn our eyes, distress and sorrow, of one sort or other, meet our view; and the affections of pity and tenderness are incessantly solicited, to administer relief to the sufferers. To the honour of the age in which we live, it must be acknowledged, no want of charity, in the popular acceptance of the word, appears. The miseries of human life, many and complicated as they are, we regard with sensations of kindness, unknown in earlier times; and remedies, in greater or less degree, are applied to

every ill, whether of mind, body, or estate, under which our fellow-creatures can languish. The dispositions which prompt to such exertions, are amiable and meritorious; and, perhaps, all circumstances considered, it may be no improbable conjecture to hazard, that the principle of charity, which is so prominent a feature in our national character, and which St. Peter tells us, covers a multitude of sins, may arrest the vengeance of heaven; and suspend the execution of those punishments, to which our manifold provocations in mind and manners, have unhappily rendered us obnoxious. Be that, however, as it may, and whatever be the leading motive with the Almighty Ruler of the universe, to discover forbearance towards us, thus much is certain, that the Father of mercies cannot but look down with complacency on every labour of love; nor can the truly penitent adopt and pursue any course of moral improvement, with better prospect of acceptance, or which shall be more likely to conciliate the compassion of their Judge, towards their own infirmities, than by alleviating the distresses of others; agreeable to the advice of the prophet Daniel, where he says, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor."

Farthest be it from us, to depreciate the benefits and excellencies of any institutions, for the relief of mankind; or to form invidious comparisons among the different plans which have been devised, for the comfort and advantage of any of our suffering brethren. All have their merits, and their uses; and while the honour of God is increased by their means, and the evils of human life are

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mitigated,

mitigated, we “ wish them good luck in the name of the Lord!”

But notwithstanding every concession in favour of other establishments, notwithstanding the praise we so readily bestow, to the purposes for which they are founded, and the success we so ardently wish to their designs, we may yet, it is presumed, be allowed, to represent our own claims to attention, and to excite each other, to a zealous solicitude towards that Charity, which is more peculiarly our own, and which, it is the professed business of this day's solemnity, to recommend to that continued patronage and support, which, we trust, it so well deserves.

Without entering on the general merits of the clerical character, or urging any thing, respecting the nature and end of our profession, or estimating how far the public welfare may be promoted, by the due discharge of it*; waving all the hopes of those connected with us, in virtue of such considerations, we venture to assert, that the widows and orphans, the subjects of our present regard have every pretension to notice and relief, in common with the distressed of other orders, and labour besides, under some misfortunes, which give them, too surely, pre-eminence in sorrow.

The provision destined for the maintenance of the parochial clergy, speaking of them collectively, is indispu-

* See this argument pursued with consummate ability by the present Bishop of London, in his Sermon preached before the Sons of the Clergy, in the year 1776.

tably poor and mean ; unequal to the proper support even of a moderate family, inadequate to the rank we hold in society, and incompetent to the various claims, which are made on us, by the public at large, the laws of our ecclesiastical constitution, and the indigent and necessitous in our respective neighbourhoods *. Under such circumstances, should we be disposed or qualified to add to a contracted income, by application to matters of a secular kind, the duties of our profession, and the rules attending it, prohibit our engaging in such concerns ; and while men in other departments, more certainly derive advantages, in proportion to the exercise of their talents, and the exertions of their industry, we are confined to the scanty emoluments, of a limited allowance, without equal resources, by which we may improve our narrow allotments.

In consequence, therefore, of so slender an appointment, and of those restraints by which we are prevented, (however wisely) from adding to it, the utmost œconomy

* Dr. Warner affirms, in the Appendix to his Ecclesiastical History, published in 1757, that of the nine thousand and some hundred churches and chapels in England and Wales, six thousand are not above £40 a year ; and adds besides, that notwithstanding the augmentations made to these small livings by Queen Anne's bounty, it will be 500 years before they are all raised to £60 a year. And Bishop Watson, in his Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, dated in 1782, asserts, that if all the revenues of the church, together with those of the two universities, (which being lay corporations, ought not to be taken into the account) were equally divided among the whole body of the clergy, (estimating their number at ten thousand) the portion to each individual would not exceed £150 a year.

is necessary, to furnish a family, from its produce, even with the ordinary accommodations of life; and to preserve that decent appearance in the world, which is expected of us, and which, in a certain degree, is requisite, to give weight to our precepts, and influence to our example. But if we find it difficult, to provide the common supports of life, for ourselves and dependents, to satisfy the demands of justice, and silence the importunities of those in our respective parishes, whom urgent necessities impel to our doors for assistance; if, difficult as is the task, we are yet able, by a rigid frugality, to effect all this, while we live, we have done every thing that can reasonably be exacted at our hands: and if, when we die, there are no legal claims to be adjusted, no creditor to take our sons to be bondmen, the candid and impartial must give us praise, for our care and management. We cannot be accountable for property which was never committed to us, for means which we never possessed.

If then the fixed rewards of our profession, afford so penurious a supply while we enjoy them, and render it altogether impossible for us, to make those establishments for our surviving families, which our prudence and affection suggest, and which are so often secured by those employed in commerce, and even by many, whose time and talents are more profitably devoted to other liberal pursuits, how peculiarly pitiable must be the lot of those, whom we, when dismissed from our labours, leave behind! How much must our widows suffer from their relation to us, and how helpless and forlorn are the little ones, their companions in misfortune!

The objects therefore of our present contemplation, are surely among the most meritorious suppliants for succour; for they are unfortunate, without being culpable; destitute, without deserving reproach; and without ever being entrusted with sufficient powers and abilities, to prevent the calamities, in which they are involved.

And how singular an aggravation is it, of that distress which we are lamenting, that the widow, perhaps, originally left a father's house, where she had been long nurtured, with fond anxiety and tenderest care; where she had been educated above the vulgar scheme; had been instructed, possibly, in the accomplishments of more polished life; and, in consequence of such attainments, was led and encouraged to hope and expect a better fate, and happier settlement? But, by how much these advantages of birth and education, endeared her to her departed husband, and rendered her a more fit and valuable companion to him, by so much have they unqualified her, for the state of humiliation into which she is fallen: for though she may have been but too well acquainted with narrow circumstances, and all the inconveniencies incident to them, yet having been unaccustomed to struggle with absolute penury, she has new lessons of practice to acquire; she has much to learn, and still more to forget: and every generous habit, both of thinking and acting, must be forever erased from her memory, before she can patiently submit to the painful degradation, of precarious dependence, menial employments, and servile offices. And if to the affliction she feels, for the loss of her much loved partner, and the melancholy apprehensions she must necessarily entertain,

entertain, respecting herself and her own future subsistence, we then subjoin the pangs she experiences, on account of her orphan children (her sons, it is probable, uneducated, unfitted for life; and her daughters exposed to a thousand evils, and yet without protection and defence); if, I say, we attend to these different sources of misery as they rise in succession, what a complicated picture of woe do they exhibit, what a wretched detail of suffering and sorrow!

Gloomy, indeed, and affecting, are the scenes to which we refer; and yet the sketch is not overcharged, nor have we recourse to art or fancy, to aid the cause we espouse. Though we admit the affliction, as above portrayed, is not to be found, in the same degree, universally, and in every clerical family, where the head of it, is prematurely removed, yet we hesitate not to affirm, that in common, and among the majority of the parochial clergy, it is impossible for them, during life, to reserve such provision for their wives and children, as shall raise them, above the reach of want, after their death. And if their sole dependence is on their professional emoluments, and they have no temporal fortunes, in augmentation of their ecclesiastical preferments, their widows and orphans must be left exposed to all the unhappiness we have described, and in some cases, perhaps, to ills we have not noticed.

But though such, and so aggravated, must too frequently, be the distress of the objects we are contemplating, if left to themselves, and neglected by others, yet, blessed be God, a remedy, a partial remedy, at least, results, from
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the sympathetic affections of our nature, and the solemn and express injunctions of the Gospel. Actuated by the joint force of such dispositions and principles, the pious, the humane, and liberal, concur, in administering relief; and the beneficent Institution which we are now recommending, interposes its charitable assistance. By the generous efforts of this Establishment the prospect brightens, and the keen edge of extreme poverty is turned aside. By the well-directed bounty of this Corporation, in conjunction with the endeavours of the other clerical societies, support is given, in such way, as the necessities of individuals may require; and such supplies are distributed, as make acceptable additions to other resources*.

For such purposes, so great and valuable, is our compassionate attention solicited; and to such ends, so salutary and important, are our benefactions appropriated. Better designs than we avow, cannot be proposed; and objects more deserving than we produce, cannot be pointed out. If there is merit in cherishing declining age, in comforting the venerable matron, in fostering the helpless infant, in forming the ingenuous youth to usefulness in life, and protecting the modest virgin; if there is praise in binding up the broken-hearted, and cheering those, whose present

* It may not be improper to inform the reader, that there are three institutions, for the relief of the surviving families of necessitous clergymen. One furnishes small annuities to their widows; another maintains and educates their children, till of age for apprenticeship; and the third binds them to trades, when thus fitted and prepared. The former charity is supported by a very slender fund, while both the latter depend entirely, on casual benefactions, and voluntary contributions.

misfortunes are all enhanced, by the recollection of better days, now past for ever, and flattering hopes irrecoverably blasted; if such characters, so circumstanced, have claims on the tender regards of those, more happily situated in the world, our widows and orphans stand unrivalled, and with such pretensions, they cannot be overlooked or forgotten.

To those of the Clergy in this assembly, it must not only be needless, but unbecoming likewise in me, even to hint at arguments to enforce the display of Christian charity. It cannot be questioned, but better motives to zealous exertions than I can offer, occur, to each of you, on the present occasion. Nor indeed, is it possible, you should ever prove unmindful or regardless of the importunities of those petitioners, who this day address you, since every consideration which influenced your predecessors, to concert and begin this good work, in behalf of the surviving families of their poorer brethren, still remains in its fullest strength, and urges their successors to continue and perpetuate it.

But while we, for our brethren and companions sakes, thus stimulate each other to perseverance, in favour of the benevolent plan which we have adopted, it cannot but be just and decent in us, to own, with proper gratitude, our obligations to those distinguished personages among the Laity, who so generously sanction our designs, and unite in the furtherance of them. The Royal assurance of patronage and supply, with which we have lately been

been honoured, challenges our first and most dutiful acknowledgments *, and the private benefaction of every particular contributor, demands our respectful returns. For whatever of prudence or self-interest, whatever of partial attachment to our own order, there may be in our conduct, those among the Laity who serve us, we are persuaded, act from the best and purest motives, the love of God, and the love of man, and therefore are entitled to our esteem, to our thanks, and to our prayers.

May that God, who has directed the widows and fatherless to trust in him, and in such numberless instances, agreeable to his divine promise, has preserved them alive, may he prosper the work in which we are engaged, and may he bless and reward all those who assist in it, with a due portion of his best gifts in this world, and with eternal happiness, in that world which is to come.

* His Majesty was graciously pleased to direct, that one third part of the profits, arising this year, from the musical performances in Westminster Abbey, should be paid to the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy.

been imposed, changes due to the most distant
acknowledgment, and the private possession of every
particular, combined, demands our respectful returns.
For whatever attachment or interest, whatever of
partial attachment to our own order, there may be in our
conduct, those among the ranks who have us are
persuaded, not from the self and partial motives, the love
of God, and the love of man, and therefore are entitled
to our efforts, to our thanks, and to our prayers.

My Father God, who has directed the widows and father-
less to trust in him, and in his merciful assistance,
agreed to his divine promise, has preserved them alive,
and in proper the work in which we are engaged, and
may he bless and reward all those who will be in with a
due portion of his gifts in this world, and with eter-
nal happiness, in that world which is to come.

His Majesty was graciously pleased to direct, that the third part
of the profits, arising from the annual payment in W. of the
minster Abbey, should be paid to the Corporation of the City of the
Clergy.

